FEEBLE.

"DID YOU TELL UP AT THE HOUSE THAT YOU WERE TOO FEEBLE TO WORK?"
"YES, AND THEY SAID THAT WAS THE SAME TROUBLE WITH THE EXCUSE."—(King.

ABSORBED IN A DULL BOOK.

CURIOUS INTEREST WHICH A BOOKSELLER OBSERVED IN A WORK IN HIS SHOP.

From The New-Orleans Times-Democrat.

"Singular as it may seem," said the second hand bookstore man in the Old Quarter, "this prosaic establishment has recently been the scene of a very pretty little romance, in which, by the way, I fear I played a highly discreditable role. About a month ago, to tell you the story briefly, a good looking young man began to frequent the shop, examining a great many books, especially the ones on that top shelf over there, but never making any purchases. He generally came in the morning, and I couldn't help observing that a pretty girl, who lives on the next block, invariably dropped in during the afternoon and also displayed great interest in the volumes on the upper shelf. Eventually the coincidence excited my curiosity, and, quietly keeping an eye on the young people, I noticed, among other things, that both of them before leaving always made a point of taking down a copy of 'Briggs's History of the Seminoles.' Briggs was an early Indian missionary, and his history of the Seminoles is the dullest book in the world. I never saw another copy in my life, and don't believe any human being ever read it, except possibly Briggs himself, and he's been dead these fifty years. Anyhow, it was very singular that such a work should prove so attractive to a couple of bright, lively young folks of the present day, and I began to smell a large sized rodent. Directly after the next visit of the good looking young man I hauled down the masterpiece of the late lamented Briggs and wasn't particularly surprised to find a neat little billet doux tucked away in a slit in the cover. I put it back, of course, and after the pretty girl made her usual call that afternoon I found a second billet doux in the same place. Now, I didn't want to interfere in an affair that was none of my business, but it struck me as rather cheeky that these interesting correspondents should be turning my shop into a free delivery postoffice without so much as buying a two bit novel to help pay rent, so I determined to give them a little lesson, and proceeded to retire Briggs temporarily in the bottom drawer of my desk.

"Next day the good looking young man sauntered in as usual," continued the story teller, "and when he saw the aching void on the top shelf he gave a violent start. 'Where is the—er—the Indian book that used to be up here?' he asked, nervously. 'Oh, you mean Briggs?' I replied. 'An old collector picked it up yesterday'—which, please to note, was perfectly true. The young man turned pale. 'But I wanted that book myself!' he exclaimed, excitedly; 'I simply must have it! Where does the collector live?' 'Well, if you're really anxious to get it,' I replied, 'you'd better let me see the old chap myself. If he thought you were a fellow collector he'd never give it up.' 'All right,' said the young man, eagerly; 'go and try, right away! What do you think he'd take for it?' 'I can get it for $10, if at all,' I replied, and he promptly handed over the amount. I told him to call an hour later, and he was here, prompt to the minute. 'Well, I got your book,' I said, pointing to a bundle, 'but, really, I'm surprised that you should care for anything so dry.' 'Oh, I'm very much interested in the—the Indian question,' said he, grabbing the package and smiling all over; 'it's a very fascinating work, I assure you.' 'Glad to hear it,' I replied, 'and, by the way, that's a new copy you have. I couldn't get the old one from the collector, but, fortunately, I picked up another at a bookstore up town.' His jaw dropped. 'Confound it all!' he roared, 'I wanted the same book—the one that was on the shelf!' 'Why, they're exactly alike,' said I. 'I know, I know,' he interrupted, 'but—but—well, you see, I had become sort of attached to the copy here at the store, and any other would—er—seem strange! I must have that identical volume!' He was such a picture of misery that I took pity on him—besides, you know, all the world loves a lover. 'I was only joking,' I said; 'you have the right book in your hand. But let me give you a bit of advice. I know a very charming young woman who is also interested in—er—Indians and who is very fond of coming in and reading Mr. Briggs's valuable work. If you take it away you will deprive her of much pleasure. You wouldn't wish to do that, would you?' 'By no means,' he replied, warmly. 'Then I will make a suggestion—leave your book here, in the old place, and when either of you feel a thirst for information about the Seminoles you can come in and peruse it.' 'You are a brick!' he shouted, and nearly wrung my hand off; and the pretty girl beams every time she sees me. So I won their eternal gratitude by playing them a mean trick. No, there's nothing very serious about the case. Slight parental opposition, I believe—forbidden to see one another and all that. I guess they'll get it straightened out in time. Meanwhile they are assiduously reading Briggs."

THE COMMODORE'S CUE.

From The Denver Times.

In the early days of steamboating on the Ohio River they had only sternwheel boats, and old Commodore McCullough, of Cincinnati, conceived a scheme to build and launch a palace "sidewheeler," which would by grace of her beauty and size "run the sternwheelers out of the trade."

He carried his ideas to a successful and beautiful finish, and sent her on her initial trip, and she came back $800 loser. The natives along the river would not ship on her, nor would they ride on her nor trust their live stock on her. They "couldn't see the wheel go round."

So the Flora Belle made trip after trip, burning from $800 to $1,000 worth of coal, and taking in perhaps $200. The newspapers took it up, and it was street talk about what a "frost" the Flora Belle was. Everybody from banker to bootblack knew the tale. At this time the old National Theatre on Sycamore-st. was the bonton theatre of Cincinnati, and its gallant men and lovely women thronged the performances. One night the Commodore attended, and as he entered there was a series of nudgings and whisperings.

"There's the Commodore. There's the owner of Flora Belle."

The play was one of those "Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl," dramas, with a "hyperbole" heroine, and there was one scene in which the lover proposed marriage.

"No," said the heroine. "I can never be your wife, Harold. You are wealthy, you are a millionaire, while I am only a poor sewing girl. If I marry you all my friends will say it was for your money, and I love you, darling, for yourself. Get rid of your money, my darling, and I will be your wife." And she made her exit in tears.

The lover walked up and down the stage wringing his hands.

"How," he cried, "how can I win her? How can I get rid of my money?"

That was the old Commodore's cue. He rose up in the centre of the parquette and shouted:

"Buy the Flora Belle!"

A PERIL OF STENOGRAPHY.

From The Washington Star.

"An Englishman who drops his h's and aspirates his a's and a stenographer and typewriter who spells phonetically from dictation make a fine combination from which trouble is sure to result unless the 'copy' is carefully revised," said a New-York merchant to a "Star" reporter the other day. "For instance, a friend of mine, and the manager of one of the most important banking houses in Wall Street, is an Englishman. Not long ago he employed a young man to act as his stenographer, and one of the first things that the latter was called upon to do was the 'taking down' of a letter to the manager's wife, who was away at a summer resort. Being a busy man the Englishman didn't take the trouble to look at the letter after it had been typewritten, but when his wife, in the course of a few days, answered it there was a hot time for the stenographer.

"'My dear Henry,' she wrote, 'what on earth do you mean by calling me "Hannah" and our little Horace "Orris"? I will admit that this sounds like you, but why do you make a joke of it before your employes?'

"Of course, the fond husband and father didn't know what it all meant, and so he wrote for an explanation, and his first letter was sent back to him. One glance at it and he rushed over to his stenographer, excitedly threw the sheet of paper down before him and demanded: 'There, what do you mean, sir, by writing my wife's name down "'Annah"?'

"'Anna?' replied the young man; 'let me see. No; I've got it Hannah, all right.'

"'But,' said the Englishman, who was furious, 'it's not 'Annah; it's Hannah!'

"'Well, there it is, Hannah—H-a-n-n-a-h.'

"'Annah be dashed!' exclaimed the Englishman. 'A-n-n-a, Hannah! Can't you read English, you blanked fool?'

"By this time the stenographer began to see through the trouble, so he begged off upon the plea that, having had a swelling in one of his ears, he had not been able to hear very well. But it cost him nearly a week's salary to square things with the boys in the office, and he always deems it best to hide when he hears the manager's wife is expected downtown."

MUSIC UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

From The Musical Enterprise.

Henri Wieniawski, the famous violinist, whom some older readers may remember having heard in this country, while making a concert tour in Russia, with his brother Josef, a noted piano player, had some peculiar experiences.

The two brothers were to play in a large town in the interior, and wished to see the hall in which the concert would take place. They were conducted through mud and snow to a large plank hut, which had been used for a circus, and on entering found nothing but bare walls.

"And is that where we are to play?" asked the brothers. "There are neither benches nor seats."

"Oh, that makes no difference," replied the marshal. "With us, every one brings his own seat."

"Yes," answered the musicians, "but what about lights? There is not a lamp in the room."

"That's nothing, either," replied their companion. "With us every one brings his own lantern."

Having learned the simple manners of the country, the musicians asked how the concert was to be advertised.

"Oh, that's easily arranged," answered the marshal. "It's true we have no printing press, but I will have a servant write the announcement in large letters on the door, and it will spread through the town fast enough."

A man soon appeared with a pound of chalk and began writing on the plank door. The brothers were somewhat dejected, but the marshal assured them that everything would be satisfactory.

Toward evening all the inhabitants were seen flocking to the place of performance, each carrying in one hand a seat and in the other a lantern. The house was crowded to overflowing. The mother of the performers was present, and, seeing the rain and snow dropping through the roof on Henri while he played, she was greatly disturbed.

"My poor son! He will take his death of cold!" she murmured, half aloud.

"Is that your son, little mother?" asked a kindly old man sitting near her, and, rising, he shouted to the young violinist, "Put your fur coat on!" Then, turning to the audience, he said, "His mother, who is sitting near me, fears he will take cold."

Other voices at once repeated the command: "Put on your fur coat! Put on your fur coat!"

Henri paused and thanked them for their permission, but added that he could not play in a fur coat. "That makes no difference!" cried the whole audience. "Put it on! Put it on!"

He did as he was bidden, and played as best he could, so encumbered.

MUCH LATER.

From The Detroit Free Press.

He had been talking and talking and talking and talking until the poor girl was so tired and sleepy she didn't know whether it was this week or last week or come next Sunday, and the clock on the mantel was holding up its hands, either in pity or in protest. Finally it occurred to the young man that an evening call had its limits, at least in a latitude where the nights were not six months long.

"Bless me!" he exclaimed, starting up suddenly, "it certainly must be time I was going home."

"Oh," she said in a dazed kind of way, "it must be a good deal later than that."

A USELESS PRESCRIPTION.

"Do you know anything good for a cold?"
"Yes."
"What is it?"
"Have you got the price of two Scotch whiskeys on you?"
"No."
"Then it's no use my telling you."—(Punch.

THE PERSONAL NOTE.

From Punch.

"I am doing a series of 'Notable Nests' for 'Sylvan Society,'" said the Serpent insinuatingly, when he found the Ringdove at home: "will you allow me to include yours?"

"But what possible interest can my poor little eggs have for the general public?" asked the Ringdove in a flutter.

"Why," replied the Serpent, "that is no affair of mine, but you must remember that I have my living to get."

FEMININE SUPERIORITY.

From The Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Here is a little story that illustrates the calm self-satisfaction with which the feminine mind asserts its superiority:

Lucy and George are children of East End parents. Lucy is seven and George is five. She has attended the primary department of a private school just four months. Here is an overheard conversation between the two:

Lucy (with a greatly pained expression)—Why, brother, anybody could tell you are only five. You don't even know the difference between corn and wheat.

George (who hates to acknowledge his inferiority)—I do, too! Wheat is—is——

Lucy (taking pity on him)—Why, George, you know well enough you don't know. Listen to me and remember. Wheat is wheat and corn is corn, and wheat grows in a wheatfield and corn grows in a cornfield! And don't you ever forget it.

WITH A LOWER CASE "B."

A CALIFORNIA BOXER WHO MADE GOOD HIS CLAIM TO HIS TITLE.

From The Los Angeles Times.

He was a printer, and he was taking a "night off." As he approached Second and Broadway about 10 o'clock p. m., navigating with some difficulty, but with great dignity, he observed a Chinaman slipping quietly along in the shadows. Instantly his imagination pictured the horrors of the Chinese mob in all its fanatical fury; in his mind's eye he was looking at the massacre at Peking; he watched the dismemberment of human bodies, and the blood as it flowed in rivers down the streets, and he saw the heads of men, women and children carried above the heads of the mob on the points of spears. All this he saw, and more, and the hot blood of revenge coursing through his veins felt like a stream of molten lead.

"I'll bet a schooner of Dutchman's delight that he's a Boxer," he murmured as he made his way across the street and stopped the Celestial.

"Say, John, I want to hold—hic—a chapel meeting—hic—with you."

"Melican heap dlunk; heap fool; muchee talk."

The printer grinned. "That's two heaps. Pretty soon—hic—I'm going to make a heap—hic—of broken China out of you—hic; that'll be another heap." Then he got serious again. "Say, are you a Boxer?"

"Heap boxer; heap fight." And indeed he was right, for he was one of the few Chinese who have prepared themselves for the inevitable attack of some youth by taking lessons in the art of self-defence.

"Well, you've got a chance to send another American—hic—to join the great majority—hic," said the printer, as he divested himself of his coat. He made a rush at the Chinaman, but the heathen sidestepped, lit out with a good right, and the printer's form was "pied" on the sidewalk.

He sat up and blinked at the Chinaman suspiciously. "Say," he said, "do you spell 'Boxer'—hic—with a lower case or—hic—a cap 'B'?"

"Talkee sense; heap jass-ack; comee fight," yelled the Celestial, excitedly. "Muchee boxer; heap good. Whoopee!"

"Well—hic—you just pick out a good soft place—hic—on the sidewalk so you'll fall easy."

The bout lasted longer this time, but the result was the same, only slightly worse. This time the Mongolian landed on him twice in rapid succession, and once more as the disciple of the art preservative was making his way toward the sidewalk. When he recovered consciousness the victor had taken his departure. Just then a policeman came along and chased him to another man's beat.

A JUSTICE WITHOUT PREJUDICE.

From The Philadelphia Post.

Wayne MacVeagh, the well known Philadelphia lawyer and ex-Minister to Italy, has a keen sense of humor.

Recently he was arguing a tedious, technical case before the Supreme Court. The affair drifted through long days of uninteresting details. When it was finally ended Mr. MacVeagh and a colleague, in talking it over, speculated as to whom Chief Justice Fuller would assign to write the opinion in the case, and the speculations resulted in a wager.

Just then Chief Justice Fuller came down the corridor. Mr. MacVeagh called him and told him of the wager.

"If you will help me out, Mr. Chief Justice, and tell me whether my guess is correct the affair can be settled right here, for you have the assigning to do and you know whom you will ask to write the decision."

"Whom have you selected in your wager, Mr. MacVeagh?" asked Mr. Fuller, keenly interested.

"Justice Gray," answered Mr. MacVeagh.

"And why did you choose Mr. Gray?"

"Because I noticed he slept through the entire argument," answered Mr. MacVeagh.

AN ARTISTIC ADVERTISEMENT.

From Printers' Ink.

A Fulton (Mo.) druggist prints the following "story" in his local paper:

"About five and one-half years ago Abraham I. Smith, living in the northern part of the county, built himself a very fine house, had it finished up in first class shape inside and out, and handsomely furnished. About two months ago he and his wife left home to spend the day, and imagine their surprise when they returned to find their house and everything in it burned.

"He drove to town and telegraphed the insurance adjuster to come on next train and he would meet him, which he did, and they drove to the house. When they reached there the adjuster remarked, 'What's the matter with you, Smith. I thought you said your house was burned, and there it stands without a blemish.' So they got out and walked up to the house, and imagine the adjuster's look of surprise when he walked up the steps, across the porch and opened the door. The entire house had burned away. The adjuster paid him the insurance, $2,200.

"What deceived the adjuster was that the paint used had preserved the house from water and dampness, and the wood was as dry as a powder house, and the fire, starting from the inside, had burned all it came to till it reached the paint, and as there wasn't any gasolene in it, it left the entire outline complete.

"Mr. Smith drove the adjuster to town, looked up the carpenter that built the house and renewed the contract with him, and a part of the specifications was that the new house was to be built inside the walls of paint left standing, and that all the interior floors, furniture, stoves and everything was to be painted two coats of the same kind of paint they had used on the outside, so he wouldn't have to have any insurance. It is hardly worth while to say that the paint on the house was the celebrated mixed paint sold only by C. M. Wright & Co., druggists, Fulton, Mo., as their paint was the only one made that will stand the test of fire, weather and time. The above is a true story, as can be proved by Turner Rosser, as he sold the lumber to rebuild the house; Dr. G. D. McCall, family physician and N. L. Townsend, the prospective son-in-law."

TOO SCANTY.

From The Denver Post.

"No self-respecting golfer would wear anything but a bright red coat in the country," says a fashion authority. That might do at some seasons of the year, but he would experience more comfort with additional covering in mosquito time.

TRUE TO THE METAPHOR.

From The Indianapolis Press.

At this point of the story our heroine swept across the room. There being nothing else for our villain to do without violating the unities, he got up and dusted.

WHAT, INDEED!

From The Chicago Tribune.

"Did you go to preaching this morning, Jack?"

"Aye, sir, but when I heard the landlubber who was preachin' say 'Ye can't sarve on a two master' I got up an' kem out. What does he know about ships?"